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first, which in our opinion is sufficient praise for any man's ambition, and we shall look forward with impatience to its successor.



ART. X. — *Webster's Speeches.*

Speeches and Forensic Arguments. By DANIEL WEBSTER.
2 Vols. 8vo. Boston. 1835.

THE first of these volumes appeared five years ago; the second is just published. Nothing perhaps illustrates more strongly the affluence of modern literature, than the feelings, with which such a work as this is received, by the reading public of Europe and America. We do not, of course, intend to say, that the publication of volumes like these is an event of very familiar occurrence; or that the frequency of their appearance is such, as seriously to weaken the impression, which they ought to produce on the minds of an enlightened age. Still, however, when we recall the names of Irving and Channing, on this side of the Atlantic; of Mackintosh, of Scott, of Canning, on the other side, and of others on both sides, not unworthy associates of these leading minds of the English language, in the present generation, we shall readily admit, that the appearance of volumes, like these before us, — masterpieces as they are of forensic and parliamentary eloquence, — is an event, which may reasonably be calculated upon regularly, from time to time, as an ordinary occurrence. We mean to say, that such is the present lofty state of civilization, so much mind is in high and constant action, that without going out of the circle of the English language, there is annually laid before the reading world, some one production at least, that may be called classical; something equal to the works of the first class of any age. We do not mean that a new Plato Demosthenes, or Newton appears every twelvemonth, on the stage. It must be left alone to time to bring to his unerring test, the merits of this as of preceding generations. But this we may safely say, — that in addition to whole branches of science, unknown to antiquity, — there are appearing every year, in almost every department of learning, works, which, if they had come down

to us as the productions of any of the ancient masters, would have been thought to do no discredit to their names. But so strong is our reverence for antiquity, that we feel a reluctance, to place any thing modern, on a level with that, which time and the consent of ages have canonized.

The reading world, since the middle of the eighteenth century, has been on the stretch of expectation, for the wonders of lost literature, which should be discovered among the cinders of the charred *papyri* of Herculaneum. The royal treasury of Naples was lavishly expended in the investigation, and not many years since, that of England came to the rescue. The learned men of every country in Europe eagerly watched the tedious process of unfolding and decyphering the manuscripts, which seemed indeed all but miraculously preserved, under a torrent ten fathoms deep of molten lava;—owing their preservation, in fact, to the heat of the superincumbent mass, by which their moisture was instantly absorbed, and the air forever excluded from them. The continually renewed chagrin at finding little besides the everlasting Philodemus, whose vapid metaphysics have, from the beginning, haunted the concern, has scarcely even yet repressed the ardor of anticipation, with which the scholar looks for some real treasure, to come from the shelves of a library of two thousand volumes, collected before the year seventy of the Christian era.

But suppose, instead of the almost worthless trash, with which this expectation has been three or four times baffled, there should have been disengaged from their place of burial, in the volcanic rock, and unrolled, and spread before the world,—free from all question of authenticity,—two such volumes, as are now before us, containing such a series of compositions in Greek or in Latin;—Historical Addresses like the Centennial discourse at Plymouth, or the Oration on Bunker Hill;—an argument before the Prætor or the Centumviri, like the argument in the Dartmouth College case:—an appeal at a public festival at Corinth or Elis, like the Address at the New York dinner, or that, in which the character of Washington was commemorated on the hundredth anniversary of his birth:—or an harangue before the ‘fierce democratie’ of Athens or the Senate at Rome, like the speech on Foote’s resolution or on the protest. The very thought is enough to make the ears of a scholar, a lover of ancient letters or ancient eloquence, tingle. Did the rescued treasure bear the name of one of the great

ancient masters ; is it likely it would be thought inferior to any of the relics of their genius, which time has spared us ? If they were ascribed to some hitherto unknown author, — to some one of the forgotten great men, who moulded the destinies and led the councils of Carthage, Tyre, or any other of the famous states of antiquity, which, for want of literary monuments, have failed to hand down to posterity the names of their lawgivers and orators, — who does not perceive that we should feel, by universal consent, that we were put in possession of the long-lost productions of a mind, worthy to be classed with the strongest and richest of those, which have inherited the admiration of ages ?

If this supposition be fairly stated, — and if, under the circumstances assumed, we have not exaggerated the tribute of admiration which would be paid to such a collection as that before us, — we may gather from it the most satisfactory illustration of the opulence of modern literature, in which treasures like these can make their appearance without being regarded as phenomena. In fact, we are not sure that we are prompt enough to do justice to contemporary merit, or the literature of the modern world, as compared with the ancient. Since the question between them has been made the subject of a controversy, there has been a disposition to run to extremes on both sides. We have, within a twelvemonth, heard forensic eloquence spoken of as a lost art ; and there is, on the other hand, a fashionable tendency, produced by the mechanical philosophy of the day, to undervalue the importance of classical learning. One paradox is as false as the other. The mechanical part of oratory was more assiduously cultivated by the great ancient masters, than it is possible it should be by those, on whom the weight of affairs devolves in modern times. Cicero, led by his passion for the Grecian discipline, or driven by the dangers of the times, was wandering through Greece and Asia Minor, studying under the philosophers, and practising in the schools of declamation, for ten or fifteen years after the period, when the weight of kingdoms and republics rests upon the shoulders of modern statesmen. No person can doubt that a man like Cicero, practising till he was thirty years old the art of rhetorical delivery, would be apt to bring that art to perfection. But Cicero was only a man. He brought to his profession no superhuman gifts ; and who is so bigoted a pedant as to believe, that Pitt, or Fox, or Canning,

or Clay, Calhoun, or Webster, could fail in any of the essentials of eloquence while discussing the greatest questions of state, — in the British House of Commons or the American Congress, — not as an exercise of declamation, not beneath the critical guidance of a hired rhetorician, and him a foreigner ; but in the responsible discharge of high official duty ; in the strenuous effort, practically and effectually, to dispose of the most momentous subjects ? We are no believers in any magical power of genius. The true inspiration is that of a resolute will, a generous heart, a cultivated understanding, a clear conscience, and an untiring perseverance. In these the great modern masters have no need to be inferior to the great ancient masters ; nor do we believe they are inferior. Training, discipline, practice, are good, nay, indispensable ; but whether is the better discipline, that of Cicero in the school of the rhetoricians at Rhodes and Athens, or of Pitt in the British parliament ; — of Cicero, composing themes on imaginary topics, and rehearsing them every day, or of Fox going down to the House of Commons every evening, determined to address that fastidious assembly on whatever matter of business might be before it ?

Let us not be mistaken. We are no scoffers at the ancients ; on the contrary, we are of the humblest, but of the most enthusiastic worshippers at their venerable shrine. But do not let us sacrifice reason and common sense ; do not let us vilify the age in which we live ; do not let us be insensible of the progress of the human mind. The very greatest masters of antiquity, — Demosthenes and Cicero, — were probably, nay, unquestionably, as rhetorical artists, superior to any of the great modern statesmen-orators. In that skill, which is possessed by a first-rate actor, of pouring the whole soul of the poet into the most familiar passage of the most familiar play ; — making a man's heart bleed at the sorrows of Hecuba, as he would at the sorrows of the mother who bore him, — rendering King Lear's peruke as touching as his own father's grey hairs ; in this talent, and it is a talent of a very high order, capable of being wielded, in a good cause, to the noblest ends, we take the great ancient orators to have been decidedly superior to all the moderns. The public taste smiled on the cultivation of this talent in ancient times. It is admired and applauded, but not demanded, nor in any degree inferior to the highest much relished in the business convocations of modern days. Being

sanctioned or rather exacted by public sentiment in Greece and Rome, it grew up into an art *sui generis*, wonderfully developed, rewarded with princely endowments, and finally carried to perfection. To this art Demosthenes and Cicero were trained. But we hope we shall not be charged with over refining, when we question whether it was precisely this art, which gave to either of these men his mastery in the state. It was one of the instruments of their power. But they were men of talent, men of sense, men of ambition, men of industry, and they lived in stirring times. They were called to take a part, each of them, in a state of public affairs as critical, as momentous, as pregnant with vast consequences, as any that ever existed in the history of man. Demosthenes lived when all the glories of republican Greece, — her arts, her genius, her literary fame, her intellectual treasures, her ascendancy throughout the civilized world, her empire, more nearly one of mind, than perhaps any political system of equal extent on record, — were rapidly shaping themselves into an instrument by which the Macedonian dynasty was to subject the world. She had studded the coasts and islands of the Mediterranean with her colonies, and filled her cities with bondmen from every nation, to whom she had taught her language and arts. She had driven her own disaffected children into exile in the remotest despotisms of the East, and surrounded their voluptuous thrones with Grecian hearts, discontented indeed, but yearning for “sweet Argos.” She had drawn the whole commerce of the known world into the channels of her navigation; — her philosophers had penetrated the recesses of Egyptian and Chaldean lore; — her travellers had visited, explored, described every soil and every people; — and, in short, the civilized world was thoroughly mercurialized, saturated, with the spirit of this volatile, importunate, restless, audacious, all-daring and all-accomplishing people. At this juncture, an iron mastery sprang up beyond the Thessalian barrier. Demosthenes was of the few who perceived it, comprehended it, and foreboded its march to universal power, over the ruins of his country. He saw the elements of its ascendancy not merely in its own structure and composition, but in the growing demoralization, the senseless feuds, the merciless rivalries, and detestable selfishness of his countrymen. He placed himself in the breach against the march of that iron phalanx, not merely of physical force, but of political domination, which,

lowering and terrific, was in motion from the hills of Macedon : literally in the breach,—for he not only shook the arsenal with the thunders of his eloquence, but stood in the ranks at the dreadful battle of Chæroneæ, where the independence of Greece was cloven down ; and with the fall of her independence the decisive blow was struck, (not then indeed understood, save by those piercing minds, whose sagacity is prophetic,) by which 'Tyre, and Persia, and Egypt, and India fell. Had the policy of Demosthenes prevailed, the career of Alexander would not have been run. Do we need any curious accounts of schools, and training, and masters of rhetoric, to explain the eloquence of a man placed in a crisis of affairs like this, with the talent to comprehend, and the nerve to face it ? Did the grammarians, the music-masters, the actors, — the men who cured the impediment in his speech, and taught him to pronounce the letter *κ*, — did his shaved head, his cave, his mouthful of pebbles, and his declamations on the sea-coast, make the orator who fulminated over Greece, to Macedon and Artaxerxes' throne ? Alas, no. How many elegant minds, — well-disposed but timid patriots,—amateurs of art,—exemplary and faithful citizens,—following the taste of the times, devoted themselves to the same discipline, the same vigils, the same masters ! Greece was full of them ; mother country and colonies, continent and islands, Asia Minor and Magna Grecia, from Athens to Marseilles, from Syracuse to the Halys ; nor is it to be doubted, but among the thousands who crowded the schools, and talked, and wrote, and declaimed, and disputed, and recited in Greek, throughout the universe, there were many, who, in the mere skill of the rhetorician, equalled Demosthenes. But the discipline, in which he excelled them, was that in which the lofty spirit is its own instructor. The school in which he learned his real eloquence, was the great school of affairs ; responsible administration ; actual conflict with mighty adverse influences, with powerful and malignant opposers, with the irresistible gravitation of a falling state.

So, too, with Cicero, no doubt an all-accomplished speaker ; but the eloquence, for which the senate saluted him the saviour of his country, and which, when he returned from his banishment, brought forth the admiring throngs of his fellow-citizens, throughout Italy, to line his pathway back to the city, as with a triumphal procession, was not learned under Archias, in his childhood, nor under Philo, in his youth ; it was not acquired

in the groves of the Athenian academy, nor in the school of Milo, at Rhodes. It was the outpouring of a great mind, thrown on great times. His school was the Roman senate, not yet subdued, though sorely threatened by the most ambitious spirit that ever trod the earth, — the human Lucifer, all-grasping, but not remorseless, who laid the foundation-stone of the gorgeous pandemonium of imperial Rome. Not yet subdued, tributary kings yet asked justice at the bar of that senate, and Cicero was their counsel. But though not subdued, not yet wholly broken down, at least not while Cicero was at the meridian of his fame, the Roman republic was in that convulsive state which announced the approaching crisis of its fate. Life was the sport of rival chiefs and remorseless factions; — fortune was as unstable as the winds; — the senate-house was blockaded by hosts of hired gladiators; — the voice of the tribunal was deafened in the multitudinous roar of the armed throngs that besieged it. At one moment a grateful province made its acknowledgments for some professional service, in offerings of gold, statues, pictures, plate, — an overwhelming tide of opulence; at another, some factious tribune pointed the battery of plebeian vengeance at the unpopular patriot, and surprised him in his luxurious villas with an interdict of fire and water. At the height of his fame, Cicero was banished, his house razed, burned, and the spot where it stood consecrated to the gods. And it was, after living through scenes like these, that he delivered the Philippics. This was the school of his eloquence. Its theatre, the temple of Jupiter Stator; its teachers, not Æschylus the Cnidian, nor Dionysius the Magnesian, nor Menippus of Stratonice; but Clodius, who drove him into exile, Catiline who planted assassins at his door, and the plausible and cruel fop that set a price upon his head, and nailed it up in the market-place.

If, then, we are at times disposed to think, overborne by the conspiring tribute of the admiration of ages, and subdued by the reverence of antiquity, that these great masters did excel all the great and eloquent of modern times, let it be ascribed rather to the influence of the state of affairs, at the periods in which they lived, than to any supposed mechanical effect of a more exquisite rhetorical training. It is not, perhaps, possible for the imagination to place bounds to the efforts which it is in the power of the human mind to make, in a commonwealth organized upon a basis of free institutions, and in which in-

terests like those at stake in Rome, in the time of Cicero, depend upon the decision of deliberative and still more of popular assemblies; with the additional stimulus growing out of the irregular action of furious parties, led by military chiefs, who have the wealth of plundered provinces to squander, and legions of veteran mercenaries at their beck. It is needless to say, that no community could long subsist under such tremendous excitements. The human nerve would lose its sensibility, from too long continued and spasmodic a tension. Domestic peace, the calm action of the faculties, the sober business of life, the gentle affections, the ordinary relations of men in well-regulated societies, go to wreck in such a storm of the fierce and lawless passions. The pendulum performs but one full vibration, — from anarchy to despotism.

Perhaps the transition state from one to the other is the condition of things most favorable to the rapid development of popular and parliamentary eloquence. If this be so, it may readily be admitted, that a well-regulated and tranquil system, — a constitutional action of the political elements, — under the soothing influence of the civilization of the modern world, which is vastly more versatile, expansive, and popular, than that of antiquity, — is incompatible with those gusts and paroxysms of intellectual energy, which constitute the eloquence of the highest order of the Grecian and Roman republics. It is not easy to conceive a state of things, in which, in modern times, an oration like the first against Catiline *could* be pronounced. An undisguised traitor, actually concerned with his fellow-traitors in raising troops and levying war against the republic, and sending his confederates to the house of the chief magistrate to assassinate him, — calmly entering the senate chamber, after the evidence of these nefarious attempts is in possession of the government, — his guilt so notorious, that the senators recede from before him in loathing horror, as he moves to a seat, — his impunity under the forms of the constitution, or from motives of state policy, so complete, that in the face of his detected treason he dares walk the streets, and make his appearance in the public assembly, there to encounter not a sheriff with a warrant, which would be served upon him now-a-days, but a passionate denunciation, to which he may reply or succumb, as he lists, — all this presents a concatenation of ideas and conditions, too remote from modern forms of criminal procedure, to be thoroughly appre-

ciated. If we can bring the scene distinctly before our minds, we cannot well exaggerate its kindling effects on the intellects of gifted men, called to act and to speak under circumstances so strange and exasperating.

We hope we shall not be thought to have wandered far from the matter immediately in hand, in engaging in these comparative views of the eloquence of ancient and modern times. Our readers will probably gather from what we have said, that we are disposed to concede to the ancients the superiority in that kind of rhetorical skill, which may be acquired by study and discipline; and that as to all the rest, there is a fair comparison, man with man, topic with topic, occasion with occasion, between the ancients and the moderns. We believe there are specimens of senatorial eloquence to be adduced from the records of the British parliament and the American Congress, that would have adorned the best days and not discredited the greatest masters of Greece or Rome.

Such specimens are contained in the volumes before us; and it is the first remark which suggests itself, in estimating the degree of praise, which ought to be awarded to them, that Mr. Webster, like so many others of our most distinguished men, owes comparatively nothing to early opportunities of education. We say comparatively. He had the advantages of a New England village school, enjoyed at intervals, and of a respectable collegiate institution, at which he studied under the usual inconveniencies created by the *res angusta domi*; and with this preparation he passed, after a brief legal noviciate, to the practice of the law. Compare this with the training of Cicero, who, at the age of five years commenced a course of education, under an accomplished Greek poet, historian, and orator; which was continued under various teachers, the most respectable philosophers, rhetoricians, and jurists of the age, at Rome, at Athens, and in Asia Minor, for near twenty years. We certainly should be the last, to disparage in any respect the importance of education, as received at the various institutions, primary and academical, by the youth of modern times. They are absolutely essential to secure the existence of the learning, requisite for the formation of the average mass of cultivated intellect, in the several professions. They are of all institutions, which can be imagined, the most republican; for they daily elevate the sons of poverty to the same level with the sons of wealth; and do more than all other causes combined to break

down the inglorious domination of mere monied influence. But brilliant instances continually show us, as in the present case, that the truly great man educates himself. No wonder he makes progress, he goes to school to a great mind ; a teacher induced by no mercenary consideration, not even by the most generous feeling of professional duty ; but inspired by ambition, glowing with the twofold delight of master and pupil ; — deriving, from the rapture of knowledge acquired, the keen and ecstatic stimulus to its farther acquisition. No teacher, however skilful, can wholly measure the capacity, — the wants, — the acquisitions of his pupil ; — no teacher, however patient and conscientious, can wholly abdicate his own personality, and sink interest, and pleasure, and indolence in the progress of his pupil. The mechanical impulse of another mind, however judiciously directed, cannot supply the place, to an intellect of a high order, of the kindling energy of its own self-developing powers ; — the hungry appetite, with which it grasps at, appropriates, and assimilates the congenial food of the soul. In fact in all education, the great effect is produced, not by positive infusion from one mind into another. Books now take the place of this species of communication, which formerly was of considerable importance. It is the method and punctuality, which result from supervision, — and much more, the animation which flows from the sympathy between the mind of the teacher and the mind of the pupil, — to which we must principally ascribe the benefits of education. We do not allude, of course, to the aid, which the young learner requires, to help him over elementary difficulties.

We shall not attempt, on the present occasion, to lay before our readers a biographical sketch of the author of these volumes. That task was very ably performed, at the period of the publication of the first volume, by one of the most accomplished scholars in the country, in an article, in the eighteenth number of the *American Quarterly Review*.* That sketch having, in addition to its original circulation in the pages of that respectable journal, been subsequently published in a separate form, it would be a work of supererogation to go over the same ground. Referring our readers to that essay, for a biographical account of Mr. Webster, we shall confine ourselves in the remaining part of this article, to a few desultory remarks on the contents of the two volumes.

* George Ticknor.

No man can even cast his eye over the table of the contents, without being struck with their great variety ; — the versatility of talent they imply ; — and with the severe requisitions made upon the mind of the statesman and lawyer in America, who holds a place as conspicuous as Mr. Webster, in his profession and in the councils of the nation. The first volume commences with his address delivered at Plymouth on the 22d December, 1820. The address on occasion of the foundation of the Bunker Hill Monument, and the Eulogies on Adams and Jefferson, and Washington, are of the same general class. They belong to a species of oratory neither forensic, parliamentary, nor academical ; and which might perhaps conveniently enough be designated as the patriotic style. They are strongly distinguished from the forensic and parliamentary class of speeches, in being, from the necessity of the case, more elaborately prepared. The public taste, in a highly cultivated community, would not admit, in a performance of this character, those marks of extemporaneous execution, which it not only tolerates, but admires, in the unpremeditated eloquence of the bar and the senate. We would not have it supposed, that we imagine an orator like Mr. Webster, to be slavishly tied down, on any occasion, to the use of his notes, or to a repetition *memoriter* of their contents. Nor are we ignorant, that perhaps the noblest bursts, — the loftiest flights, the last and warmest tints in his discourses of this kind, — were the unpremeditated inspiration of the moment of delivery. The contrary opinion would not only be an absurd conception of the power of a highly gifted mind ; but it would contradict the very laws of the understanding. A man could not, if he would, anticipate in his closet, the excitement of the moment of delivery ; — he cannot forestall the sympathetic influence upon his feelings, his imagination, and his intellect of the mute, the listening, and the applauding throng ; — and he must be but an unpractised and timid speaker, who, however severe the method, which he may deem to be imposed upon him by the nature of the occasion and subject, should yet feel obliged, as was said by a brother critic beyond the water, to confine myself “to pouring out fervors a week old.” We take it that a man, who wishes to do justice to a great theme, must thoroughly study and understand it ; — must accurately and minutely digest in writing the substance and the form of his address ; — must entirely possess himself before hand of what he means to say ; — and then

throw himself on the excitement of the moment, and the sympathy of the audience. In those portions of his discourse, which are purely didactic or narrative, he will not be apt to rise, — he will not have occasion to rise, — above his notes; though even here new facts, illustrations, and suggestions will spring up before him, as he moves on. But when the topic rises, — and the strain becomes loftier and bolder, — the thick-coming fancies cannot be repelled, — the whole storehouse of the memory is unlocked, its most hidden shrines fly open, — all that has been seen, read, heard, felt, returns in vivid colors, — the cold and premeditated text will no longer suffice for the glowing thought, — the stately balanced phrase gives place to some fresh and graphic expression, that rushes unbidden to the lips, — the unforeseen locality or incident furnishes an apt and speaking image, — and the whole discourse, by a kind of unconscious instinct, transposes itself into a higher key. As the best illustration of our remark and proof of its justice, we subjoin one of the most eloquent passages, that ever dropped from the lips of man, the address to the survivors of the battle of Bunker Hill, and the apostrophe to Warren. These were topics of course, too obvious and essential, in an address on laying the corner-stone of the Monument, to have been omitted in the orator's notes. But the man, who supposes that the apostrophe to Warren was elaborated in the closet, and committed to memory, may know a great deal about contingent remainders, but his heart must be as dry and hard as a remainder biscuit. He knows nothing of eloquence or the philosophy of the human mind. We quote it the rather, because in the slight grammatical inaccuracy, produced by passing from the third person to the second in the same sentence, we perceive at once one of the most natural consequences and a most unequivocal proof of the want of premeditation. When the sentence commenced, "But, — ah, — him," it was evidently in the mind of the orator, to close it, by saying, "how shall I commemorate him?" But in the progress of the sentence, — forgetful, — unconscious of the words, but glowing and melting with the thought; beholding, as he stood near the spot where the hero fell, his beloved and beautiful image rising up from beneath the sod, 'with the rose of heaven upon his cheek and the fire of liberty in his eye, — the blood of his gallant heart still pouring from his wound,' — he no longer can speak *of* him; he must speak *to* him. The ghost of Samuel

did not more distinctly rise before Saul, than the image of Warren stood forth, to the mental perception of the orator. He no longer attempts to tell his audience what Warren was, but passing from the third person to the second, he can only say "how shall I struggle with the emotions, that stifle the utterance of *thy* name." The sorriest pedant alone would have turned away from that touching appeal to Warren himself, present, visible, to the mind's eye, on the spot where he fell,—because he had commenced the sentence in the third person. But we quote the whole passage :—

"Venerable men! You have come down to us from a former generation. Heaven has bounteously lengthened out your lives, that you may behold this joyous day. You are now, where you stood fifty years ago, this very hour, with your brothers and your neighbors shoulder to shoulder, in the strife for your country. Behold, how altered! The same Heavens are indeed over your head; the same ocean rolls at your feet; but all else, how changed! You hear now no roar of hostile cannon. You see no mixed volumes of smoke and flame rising from burning Charlestown. The ground strowed with the dead and dying; the impetuous charge; the steady and successful repulse; the loud call to repeated assault; the summoning of all that is manly to repeated resistance; a thousand bosoms freely and fearlessly bared in an instant to whatever of terror there may be in war and death;—all these you have witnessed, but you witness them no more. All is peace. The heights of yonder metropolis, its towers and roofs, which you then saw filled with wives and children, and countrymen in distress and terror, and looking with unutterable emotions for the issue of the combat, have presented you to-day with the sight of its whole happy population, come out to welcome and greet you, with a universal jubilee. Yonder proud ships, by a felicity of position, appropriately lying at the foot of this mount, and seeming fondly to cling around it, are not means of annoyance to you, but your country's own means of distinction and defence. All is peace; and God has granted you this sight of your country's happiness, ere you slumber in the grave forever. He has allowed you to behold and to partake the reward of your patriotic toils; and he has allowed us, your sons and countrymen, to meet you here, and in the name of the present generation, in the name of your country, in the name of liberty, to thank you!

"But, alas, you are not all here! Time and the sword have thinned your ranks. Prescott, Putnam, Stark, Brooks, Read, Pomeroy, Bridge! Our eyes seek for you in vain amidst this broken band. You are gathered to your fathers, and live only to

your country, in her grateful remembrance and your own bright example. But let us not too much grieve, that you have met the common fate of men. You lived at least long enough to know, that your work had been nobly and successfully accomplished. You lived to see your country's independence established, and to sheathe your swords from war. On the light of liberty, you saw arise the light of peace, like

‘another morn,
Risen on mid-noon;’

and the sky, on which you closed your eyes was cloudless.

“But — ah — Him! the first great martyr in this great cause! Him! the premature victim of his own self-devoting heart! Him, the head of our civil councils, and the destined leader of our military bands; whom nothing brought hither but the unquenchable fire of his own spirit; Him, cut off by Providence, in the hour of overwhelming anxiety and thick gloom; falling ere he saw the star of his country rise; pouring out his generous blood, like water, before he knew whether it would fertilize a land of freedom or of bondage! — how shall I struggle with the emotions, that stifle the utterance of thy name! Our poor work may perish, but thine shall endure! This monument may moulder away; the solid ground it rests upon may sink down to a level with the sea; but thy memory shall not fail! Wheresoever amongst men a heart shall be found, that beats to the transports of patriotism and liberty, its aspirations shall be to claim kindred with thy spirit!”

In the class of addresses, to which those under consideration belong, the eloquence of other countries in modern times and of our own in other periods has furnished few if any examples. In antiquity among the Greeks patriotic commemorations were not unknown, and funeral orations were pronounced at Rome under the most imposing public ceremonies in the forum. The funeral discourses of the French pulpit and some of the addresses of the Italian academies may be ranked, perhaps, in the same general class. Our statesmen of the revolutionary age, absorbed in the pressing avocations of the crisis, bestowed none of their strength on tasks, not exacted by the imperious demands of duty. The state of the public mind and the condition of public affairs were such, that the occasions did not present themselves. From obvious causes connected with the early settlement of the country, the management of topics and occasions of commemoration was left to the pulpit. Perhaps the addresses delivered in Boston on the anniversaries of the 5th of March were the first commencement made of public addresses of this description; — and they were succeeded and

superseded by the orations on the fourth of July. Of late years the range of occasional performances of a patriotic, historical, and commemorative character has greatly extended itself. The most eminent minds, in most parts of the country, have been enlisted in this branch of the public literary service. The addresses already enumerated in the volumes before us, are among the very happiest specimens of this species of composition, and are sufficient to shew that it is likely to become a rich department of our literature.

In the second of the volumes before us, are contained one or two beautiful efforts of a character somewhat different from those just described, combining the patriotic and the political; but assuming from the occasions which called them forth, a highly cheerful and animated tone. Such is the address, which commences the second volume, delivered at the dinner given by the citizens of New York, in honor of the efforts of Mr. Webster, in support of the constitution, and such also is the address, on a similar occasion, at Pittsburg. The entire collection contains nothing more beautiful than the first of these Speeches. It seems to us justly characterized, in the following passage, in the introduction to the second volume.

“ It will be recollected, that, at the close of the session of 1831, Mr. Webster was invited by a large number of the most respectable citizens of New York and its vicinity, including among them distinguished gentlemen of both political parties, to meet them at a festival, prepared as an expression of their satisfaction, at the part, which he had taken in the great constitutional struggle, that had occurred in the Senate of the United States. There were persons uniting in this tribute of respect and gratitude to Mr. Webster, who had perhaps never acted together before, in any matter connected with party politics. The principle and the feeling, which had brought them together, for the purpose named, are emphatically stated, in the address made to Mr. Webster, by the president of the day, (Chancellor Kent,) and which we have prefixed as the proper introduction to the report of Mr. Webster's speech, at the commencement of the present volume. It was a principle of attachment to the Union, and a feeling that the maxims of constitutional law, on which the stability of the Union rests, had, ‘ by the discussions in the Senate and the master genius that guided them, been rescued from the archives of tribunals and the libraries of lawyers, and placed under the eye and submitted to the judgment of the American people. *Their verdict is with us and from it there lies no appeal.*’ The speech of Mr.

Webster, which we have already ventured to name, as one of the very happiest of his efforts, is conceived in the full spirit of the occasion. It is the outpouring of a full heart, the breathing of a pure patriotism, kindling with the sentiment of the worth of the Union, as illustrated in the history, the growth, and the prosperity of the great metropolis, in which he spake, and in the lives and services of the patriots, who in all the states contributed to establish the independence and framed the constitution of the United States. What citizen of New York, but must have glowed with honest pride, as Mr. Webster unrolled, on this occasion, the long list of her illustrious men! What lover of the Union but must have caught new views of its inestimable value, as its connexion with the prosperity, the industry, and the whole social system of the country was pointed out with the eloquence of a master!"

Among the miscellaneous contents of these volumes, we notice with peculiar satisfaction the "Introductory Lecture read to the Boston Mechanics' Institution at the opening of the course of lectures, Nov. 12, 1828." This, also, is an effort, and a most successful one, of a class quite without the professional or public range of the distinguished men of the last generation. It is a species of composition, which, like the institution to which it was addressed, was unknown in antiquity. Even in modern England, the parent country of the Mechanics' Institution, Lord Brougham is, we believe, the only one of the distinguished public men of the day, who has found leisure to co-operate in the noble work of encouraging the efforts of those for whom these associations are intended, to improve their minds. It is not easy for any man, in however high and powerful a sphere, to work out more good for the mass of his fellow-men, than, in the natural effect of social and moral influence, may be expected to flow from an address like that to which we have alluded, delivered by a man like Mr. Webster, before an assembly of inquisitive mechanics, and in the presence of hundreds of young men, who are to acquire their livelihood by the joint energy of manual and intellectual power. How mean compared with the service thus performed, are the ostentatious and selfish labors, beginning and ending in personal aggrandizement, of the mere partizan politician! How wide the contrast between the time devoted and the pains taken by one who adorns the highest stations in political and parliamentary life, to cheer, to instruct, and aid the industrious artizan in the circle of his pursuits, and the insidious craft which knows

no object but that of stimulating the jealousies of the laboring classes, and stinging them into a fancied consciousness of unreal wrongs! The true friend of those classes is he who aids and encourages them to the acquisition of knowledge, and the improvement of their minds, not merely with a view to facilitate and make more productive that industry which is their support; but as the only sure basis of permanent progress and advancement, either of individuals or classes. It is one thing to organize parties, and to obtain a factious ascendancy, — a power residing in a numerical majority, to be wielded, for selfish purposes, by skilful leaders. But such a power, in its very nature, requires the *continued ignorance* and *personal insignificance* of those who compose the *guided mass*, in order to assure the *continued sway* of the *guiding few*. The true friend of his fellow-citizens is he who bends a liberal portion of his energies, and encourages them to bend theirs, toward the improvement of their mental powers, — the acquisition of the knowledge, first, which is most immediately required, and next, which is most variously useful. It is the acquisition alone of such knowledge, which contributes to success in the particular calling followed, and to a steady and permanent elevation in society. There is no other elevation either steady or permanent. Distinctions of property are mean and fluctuating, — and the hope of office, the worthless bait by which the duped partizan is caught, is, of all others, the most delusive. It is continually wrested from one, to be thrown out to another. But the influence and the consideration, the self-respect and the happiness, which repose on the cultivation of the mind, are as durable as they are pure.

The first volume of these speeches contains some of the most distinguished of Mr. Webster's professional efforts, — the argument in the Dartmouth College case, — on the great steamboat monopoly question, Gibbons and Ogden, — and on the question on the constitutionality of the insolvent laws of the states, Ogden and Saunders. There are one or two other professional efforts, — as the defence of Judge Prescott, in the first volume, and of the Kennistons, in the second. But the three arguments first named, on questions of constitutional law, may justly be considered as forming a class by themselves. It was by these arguments that Mr. Webster first distinguished himself as a great constitutional lawyer; and in the studies connected with these and other great causes of a similar character, prepared himself for the eminent part he has since performed as a great constitutional statesman.

Constitutional law, as understood in this country, is also a branch of learning which may be said to be peculiar to the United States, and to the present and immediately preceding generations. The constitutional law of Great Britain, owing to the unity of their political system, is vastly less rich and complex than that which has grown up in the United States, from the peculiar character of our confederacy. It assumes, on a few points, in that country, the aspect of laborious antiquarian research, but the absence of all co-ordinate jurisdictions of associated and limited sovereignties ; and the want of any fundamental law, (or constitution,) of obligation paramount to the ordinary power of legislation, have kept out of the British tribunals all those delicate, momentous, and singularly imposing questions, which give such unrivalled dignity and consequence to the Supreme Court of the United States ; and of necessity, raise those who appear with credit at its bar, to the rank of expounders, not to say framers, of constitutions. Framers, we might almost say ; for, whereas language is too poor, and human sagacity too limited, to foresee and to express the infinite shades of circumstance and fortune, which are to manifest themselves in growing communities, it is the high province of the constitutional lawyer, with wisdom and good faith, to trace the true analogy of the charter, to preserve its spirit, to prevent a real violation from growing up under cover of a formal observance, and so skilfully to interpret and apply the fundamental law to the change of circumstances, that the grave inconvenience of its frequent alteration may be avoided, without bringing its text into conflict with the impatient temper of a restless and rapidly progressive age. It would be foreign from our purpose to attempt an analysis of the great constitutional arguments of Mr. Webster above alluded to. They are familiar to every well-read member of the profession, and every politician in the country, and will take rank with the ablest expositions which have been made of the constitution.

From them the transition is direct to the parliamentary efforts of a constitutional character, which form so important a portion of the contents of these volumes ; the speeches on the great Carolina controversy, and on the control of the public finances. It is our object, in the present article, to avoid a party view of the volumes before us, and of Mr. Webster's political relations to the country. But no generous adversary finds it difficult to award to an eminent opponent the just meed

of praise. No person is likely to honor our pages with a perusal, who, whatever may be his political preferences as to men or parties, can wish to withhold the tribute of respect involuntarily paid, by a discerning mind, to high displays of intellectual power, on the part of a countryman. Party divisions happily, in this country, are likely to be transitory. If we have reason to fear that they will never cease to exist; if our peculiar situation exposes us to an unmeasured diffusion of their baneful spirit, past experience and the nature of things not less conclusively authorize the hope, that the particular divisions will generally prove of short duration. Our institutions, and the state of society in the United States, furnish no basis for permanent distinctions. The party in power has always been, and always will be, obnoxious to the charge of seeking to extend, and to perpetuate that power, *per fas et nefas*; the party out of power, by a tendency equally natural and strong, assumes the popular ground of limitation, correction, and reform. Circumstances, varying in particular cases, decide the duration and success of the controversy. The opposition may, for a long time, be so strong as to keep those in power effectually on their good behavior; or so weak, that their ranks will rapidly become too crowded for concert and unity. They then fall to pieces, and new combinations are formed. The course of the patriot may not always be as clearly defined as he could wish, as to measures of honest temporary expediency; but he cannot hesitate as to great points of public policy. He must love the Union, reverence the Constitution, study and aim to promote the great interests of the country, disdain to compromise his principles, — learn to estimate, at their just nothingness, the petty bribes of office, — deeply imbue his mind with an ever-present sense of the vast good or mischief to be wrought out or sacrificed for millions, by an honest or corrupt administration of government; and though last, not least, prize and cherish, as a portion of the best wealth of the republic, *the fame of its distinguished sons*.

It is this last object, and no less liberal purpose, that we would gladly be thought to have had in view, in the present desultory and imperfect notice of a book, which will undoubtedly be considered hereafter, as one of the most distinguished specimens of American eloquence, as the depository of some of the proudest efforts of American talent and statesmanship. We wish to regard it with a proportionate increase of that feeling of satis-

faction with which the South-American patriot prizes, even on the other side of the Cordilleras, the powerful appeal which it contains on behalf of the new republics ; the masterly exposition of the principles on which the prosperity of the Hispano-American commonwealths must rest. We would not be cold in our commendations of that eloquence which has kindled enthusiasm on the plains of Greece, and in the hearts of the patriots, who, under obstacles and discouragements, here almost inconceivable, have built up a constitutional state on the ruins of a Turkish satrapy. Here, at home, we would have all men, of all parties, contemplate these powerful productions of a great American mind, with those feelings of honest *compatriotism*, (if we may venture on the word,) with which an American in Europe looks back to all that is great and worthy in his native land. As he crosses billow after billow of the great Atlantic, the lines of party difference, like the geographical features of the country, should fade from his sight ; and if he have a true heart in his bosom, not more surely will the outlines of the landscape melt into the mist, than sectional and party prejudices will vanish from his mind. He lands in a hemisphere whose institutions, whose social system are uncongenial with our own, and he feels all his honest championship called into requisition. He hears his country misrepresented, derided, and vilified ; he cannot spare one of the bright names which are her just boast. He will not deprive himself of the aid of one robust arm, nor shut his ear on the music of one eloquent voice. What is local party to him ? He has another battle to fight. What are tariff, and nullification ; administration, and opposition ? He is an American citizen, and an American patriot ; his prejudices subside ; his national instinct rises, and he holds up to admiration whatever his country has produced, for which he can challenge respect and applause, from whatever pen it may have proceeded, from whatever lips it may have fallen.

Who now knows, who wishes to know, anything of the party divisions of other times ? Who remembers that the Scipio, who destroyed, and the Cato, that counselled the destruction of Carthage, were bitter opponents ? Who recollects that there were times when Samuel Adams and John Hancock did not speak to each other ; that even in the revolutionary congress, there were parties, feuds, and intrigues ? Time and the grave, the great reconcilers, have healed the

dissensions, and patriotism has embalmed the common good, which was sought, promoted, and established by willing or reluctant co-operation. Shall nothing but time teach the lessons of wisdom and kind feeling? Shall the tomb be the only temple from which the voice of patriotism shall speak with full effect? Is it impossible, before the last end, to tame the rage of detraction, — to do justice to contemporary worth?
